



FACULTY OF MUSIC  
UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA MALAYSIA

SELF-CONFIDENCE IN PERFORMING AMONG MUSIC STUDENTS  
FACULTY OF MUSIC AT UiTM

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# SELF-CONFIDENCE IN PERFORMING AMONG MUSIC STUDENTS IN THE FACULTY OF MUSIC AT UiTM

## Abstract

*This study aimed to investigate the factors which contributed to students' low self-confidence in during music performances, how low self-confidence affected student performances and to find out how students improved their self-confidence in musical performance at the Faculty of Music in UiTM Shah Alam. The respondents of this study were 100 music comprising of 50 males and 50 females. Questionnaires were distributed to the students at random. Findings showed that a majority of subjects from all programs felt moderately high confidence when performing on their major instrument (Total Mean = 6.80, SD=1.645). It appears that all subjects felt their lack of self-confidence has affected their performances and a majority of subjects (n=95) reported "nervousness", "lack of practice" and "fear of failure" as the main factors that contributed to their low self-confidence. Students said that having enough practice on their instrument was their way to overcome low self-confidence during performances followed by warming up before performances.*

## INTRODUCTION

Self-confidence refers to the belief in "one's personal worth and likelihood of succeeding" (Neill, 2005, p.1). However, having self-confidence does not mean that individuals will be able to do everything. Typically, individuals will have some areas of their life where they feel confident, e.g. in academics, public speaking, personal appearance, social relationships and performing in front of an audience. On the other hand, people who experience low or poor self-confidence tend to avoid taking risks because of the fear of failure. In some cases, these people often do not achieve their potential in life simply because they have already viewed themselves as incapable of doing the task and experiencing failures. They generally do not expect to be successful and often put themselves down. In contrast, people who have self-confidence are generally more assured of what they can do and trust their own abilities. Furthermore a confident person is more able to accept rejection and criticism, and also more willing to learn from their mistakes as well as make effort to improve themselves.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Music students in UiTM are required to perform during forum every semester and for their studio exams. At the end of their study in UiTM they are required to perform in Mini Recital (for music education students) and Degree Showcase (for music performance students). All these performances require students to pass in order to get their diploma or undergraduate certificate. As a result, music students cannot avoid or escape from experiencing feelings of worry, anxiety and poor/low self-confidence during performances. When a person experiences the above, he or she is bound to feel a lack of confidence to perform in front of an audience which usually brings fear in itself.

Lack of self-confidence tends to affect student's performance quality before or during performances. The feeling of poor or low self-confidence is contributed by many factors and students need to overcome this problem. Students have differing levels of confidence in different situations. This study aims to look at the factors which are related to self-confidence and the issues connected to poor or low self-confidence during music performances, how low self-confidence affects student's performance and how students try to improve their self-confidence during musical performances.

## **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

Music students in the Faculty of Music UiTM are involved in performances every semester. The purpose of this study is to investigate the factors which contribute to students' low/poor self-confidence during performances. This study also aims to find out how students try to improve their self-confidence in musical performance and to identify how self-confidence affects their performances.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This study is based on the following research questions:

1. What are the factors which contribute to students' low/poor self-confidence in performing during music performances?
2. How does low self-confidence affect student performances?
3. How do students try to improve their self-confidence in musical performance?

## **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Music students are always involved with musical performances every semester. While performing in front of an audience should be a normal activity for all music students, there are those who still experience feelings of poor self-confidence before and during performances. This study will help understand why students experience poor/low self-confidence during music performances and their efforts at overcoming poor self confidence. This study may help lecturers and music educators understand the factors that cause students to feel poor self-confidence during their performances. It could also explain why some students fail forum.

## **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The samples for this study were music students only. This study was conducted at the Faculty of Music in UiTM. Students were selected from among four programs which are Degree programs of Music Education, Music Composition, Music Performance Degree programs and Diploma in Music program.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Aberdeen University Counselling Service (2006) stated that "people who are not self-confident depend excessively on the approval of others in order to feel good about themselves. They tend to avoid taking risks because they fear failure. They generally do not expect to be successful. They often put themselves down and tend to discount or ignore compliments paid to them. By contrast, self-confident people are willing to risk the disapproval of others because they generally trust their own abilities. They tend to accept themselves and they don't feel they have to conform in order to be accepted" (p. 1)

### **Self-confidence**

According to Eldred (2002, p.27) "definitions about confidence are limited but generally relate to an individual's beliefs about their abilities and attributes with regard to specific aspects of themselves or in specific situations, referred to as situational confidence". Norman and Hyland (2003, p. 260) suggest that there are three elements to confidence which are 'cognitive' - a person's knowledge of their abilities, 'performance'- their ability to do something and 'emotional' - feeling comfortable about the former two aspects. Johnson (2003, p. 2) stated that "confident students who practice efficiently and effectively usually perform well and they gain confidence by performing well, thus creating a positive spiral self-

reinforcing behavior and students' beliefs their ability". Practice can help students perform well and to be more confident. "Musical practice may be employed to accomplish many purposes including developing technical abilities, learning new music, refining musical expression or memorizing a piece" stated by Barry and Hallam (2002, p. 151). In practice "performers work to accentuate their individual strengths and eliminate their weaknesses" (Jorgensen, 2004, p. 6). Johnson (2003, p. 2) also stated that "it often seems that as our students grow older, anxiety becomes a greater factor of their ability to perform and a few problems during a performance can cause the student's confidence to diminish dramatically". In other words, anxiety is one of the factors students' experienced low self-confidence, especially during musical performances. Ritter (2008, p. 130) has found that "those performers who lack confidence maybe haven't yet develop the skills necessary to play effectively and therefore find themselves in unfamiliar situation which then contributed to their feelings of inadequacy".

### **Self-efficacy**

Self-efficacy is defined as "people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives and how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave" (Bandura, 1994, p. 71). According to Bandura (1994, p. 71), "self-efficacy produces these effects through four major processes which are cognitive, motivational, affective and selected processes." Bandura (1997, p. 215) stated that "Students whose sense of self-efficacy was raised set higher aspirations for themselves, showed greater strategic flexibility in the search for solutions, achieved higher intellectual performance, and were more accurate in evaluating the quality of their performance than were students of equal cognitive ability who were led to believe they lacked such capabilities". According to Heslinand and Klehe (2006, p. 705), "self-efficacy is also a much stronger predictor of how effectively people will perform a given task than either their self-confidence or their self-esteem". In addition, Brown (1999, p. 1) said that "when individuals have low self-efficacy expectations regarding their behavior, they limit the extent to which they participate in an endeavor and are more apt to give up at the first sign of difficulty". Bandura (1994, p. 71) stated that "the successful experiences would create a strong sense of belief in a person's efficacy and failures, on the other hand, undermine it, especially if these occur before a sense of efficacy is firmly established Self-efficacy". Neill (2005, p. 1) stated that "self-confidence can be viewed as self-efficacy".

According to Bandura (1977, p. 191), "self-efficacy is defined as a person's belief about their ability to organize and execute courses of action necessary to achieve a goal". On the other hand, according to Neill (2005, p. 1), it can be general or specific where "general self-efficacy is belief in one's general capacity to handle tasks" and "specific self-efficacy refers to beliefs about one's ability to perform specific tasks in certain things". Pajares (2000, p. 21) said that "Self-efficacy can also be seen as the confidence that people have in their ability to do the things that they try to do".

Bandura (1977) stated that beliefs about "self-efficacy have a significant impact on our goals and accomplishments by influencing personal choice, motivation, and our patterns and emotional reactions" for example, "choking", is a physical response to a situation, and usually experienced when there is fear of not performing well or failing. Someone who experiences fear may feel physical reactions such as shortness of breath (short and shallow) and a feeling of tightening of the muscles. "This response to fear of performing badly on tests, on the golf course or when speaking in public may occur any time" (Compte & Postlewaite, 2003, p. 3). "People with high assurance in their capabilities approach difficult tasks as challenges to be mastered rather than as threats to be avoided and they heighten and sustain their efforts in the face of failure" (Bandura, 1994, p. 71). They also quickly recover their sense of efficacy after experiencing failures.



## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research design**

This study was conducted using the quantitative method to collect data through the use of a survey questionnaire.

### **Sample**

The sample for this study was music students registered in three programs in the Faculty of Music in UiTM. Students from three programs, namely, Music Education, Music Composition, and Music Performance were selected for this study. The samples were selected randomly, which is 50 males and 50 females.

### **Research Instrument**

A survey questionnaire was designed to collect data for this study. The questionnaire was divided into several sections which look at factors which contribute to students' low or poor self-confidence during performances, how low self-confidence affects students' performance and how do students improve their self-confidence in musical performance. This questionnaire in section D and section E was constructed by referring to other research (Beck Anxiety Inventory, 1988) and was validated by the supervisor as well as tested in a pilot study.

### **Data analysis**

The researcher analyzed data using SPSS Version 17. The data was analyzed by finding frequencies, crosstabulations and means for comparisons between programs and gender.

## **RESULTS**

### **Demographic profile of sample**

Subjects for this study ( $N=100$ ) consisted of 50 males (50%) and 50 females (50%). Questionnaires were distributed to students in all programs; which were 34 ( $n=34$ ) from the diploma program, followed by 25 ( $n=25$ ,) from the degree performance program, 22 ( $n=22$ ,) from the music education program and 19 ( $n=19$ ,) from the composition program.

The highest percentage were students from semester three ( $n=24$ ,) followed by students from semester six ( $n=19$ ,) and 16% from semester four ( $n=16$ ). Semester five students consist of 13 students followed by 12% from semester two ( $n=12$ ).

### **Feelings of self-confidence**

Subjects were asked to indicate how confident they usually felt during their performances on their major instruments by circling a number from a scale of 1 ("not confident") to 10 ("completely confident"). Responses showed that a majority of subjects from all programs felt moderately highly confident when performing on their major instrument (Total mean = 6.80,  $SD=1.64$ ). As expected the highest mean is from the performance program ( $M=7.12$ ,  $SD=1.78$ ,  $n=25$ ) and the lowest is from students in the music education program ( $M=6.50$ ,  $SD=1.64$ ,  $n=22$ ). Table 1 shows the mean scores for all programs.